

Generations Working Together caught up with Laura Taylor, of [Active Stirling to talk about the intergenerational project](#) she runs and some challenges which, with the help of GWT, she has overcome in her practice.

The project

My project is [Generations Active Together \(GAT\)](#) where young people from local high schools PE department deliver physical activity in local care homes. Last year, 56 pupils aged 16 /17 years from four high schools and 58 residents aged 70-95 years from four local care homes, took part.

Running Aug-Oct each year, GAT runs inhouse activities to prepare the young people for going into local care homes – teach them physical activity suitable for care home residents, dementia training, talk about stereotypes, tackling ageism. They then come up with exercises and activities that can be done in the care home. It was the first time the young people had been in a care home and the first session with a new school intake.

First session at a new school...

So, it was the first session with this new school and in this particular care home. A care home resident, living with severe dementia, in her late 90s, asked one of the minority ethnic pupils taking part, what language he spoke. It turned out that she had lived in Africa and knew Swahili. The boy didn't hear her question at first, but the other pupils did. It wasn't a malicious question-just a general one. She wasn't being racist but could be taken that way.

GAT took it seriously. They spoke to the class teacher and explained the incident. Laura then filled in an incident form. She then contacted the care home to keep them informed. The boy in question decided not to attend further activities, which was his choice, and the woman who had made the comment wasn't allowed to attend further activities – which was not the outcome Laura wanted! The incident shook her as it was the first session back and the intergenerational work wasn't happening as she had expected.

Reaching out

She then got in contact with Simone Tomaz, at Stirling University who she has been working alongside with the GOALD project. Simone and Laura emailed GWT and arranged a meeting with Lorraine George who offered advice and support. Lorraine pointed out that there are lots of scenarios today with sex, gender, race and other issues which differ from when older people were young. So, what could Laura do to improve this gap in understanding between the generations and ensure that if something occurred again, she was prepared?

Improving practice

So, Laura worked with Lorraine who found some dated publications including a Negro songbook, to show the pupils what was once acceptable but that is no longer acceptable. So, this year, Laura has a section on scenarios which she uses to discuss these kinds of issues with the young people before they start their intergenerational project. Sections include 'what is dementia?'

ActiveStirling **What is Dementia?**

Dementia affects the brain, making it harder to remember things or think as clearly as before. It's an umbrella term for over 100 different types of illnesses and disease symptoms. Symptoms of dementia may include memory loss and difficulties with day to day tasks, language and problem-solving.

Dementia is not part of the natural ageing process

Caused by a loss of nerves cells

Progressive Condition

4 most common types of dementia are

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Vascular Dementia
- Frontotemporal Dementia
- Lewy Body Dementia

ActiveStirling **What is Dementia?**



But importantly, there are a number of slides with scenarios and explanations of how things have changed that may lead to misunderstandings between the generations.

ActiveStirling



Racism and discrimination was not illegal in Britain until 1965

Here is some words that was once acceptable to describe ethnic minority



ActiveStirling

After watching these videos, discuss the following scenarios
Pupils delivering in the care home

An older person makes a negative remark about the appearance of a pupil – their ethnic minority/accnt

What if they are living with Dementia ... how could this affect their communication?

What has changed over the years?

There is also a scenario if an older person misgenders a pupil.

ActiveStirling

An older person misgenders a pupil and calls them by an inappropriate name

What has changed over the years?

The Gender Recognition Act 2004, which came into effect on 4 April 2005

They may not be able to watch the news or have access to social media to be informed

They may have not heard you introduce yourself or be able to see you clearly due to eye/hearing condition

They may not understand that sex and gender are not the same

ActiveStirling

Please remember that things have changed since the older person was younger.

There are things that they use to say about other ethnic minorities that was once acceptable.

They may not realise that they are saying anything offensive.

And indeed, if an older person makes a remark about sexuality choices.

ActiveStirling

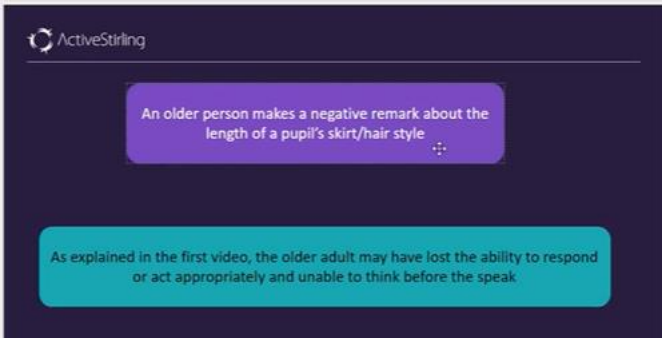
An older person makes a negative remark about sexuality choices

What was society like in the 40/50/60's for LGBTQ+

What has changed over the years?

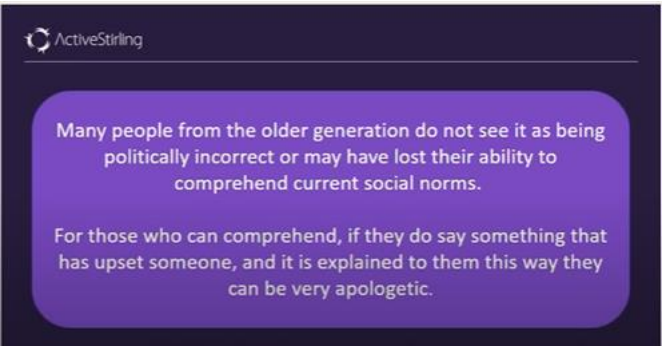
1967: The Sexual Offences Act 1967 stipulated that private sex acts between consenting men over the age of 21 would no longer be a criminal offence in England and Wales, although Scotland did not follow suit until 1980 and Northern Ireland until 1982.

Laura explains that when she discussed this with her group this year, the young people were shocked to find out that homosexuality was still a criminal offence in Northern Ireland in 1982.

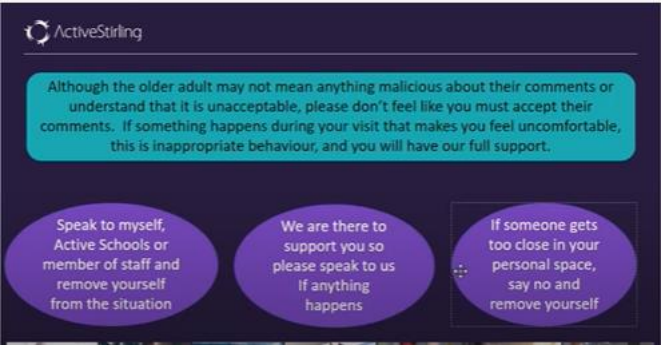


Comments about appearances may happen – and so this slide was included too – just as an opportunity for the young people to prepare for various scenarios which may occur.

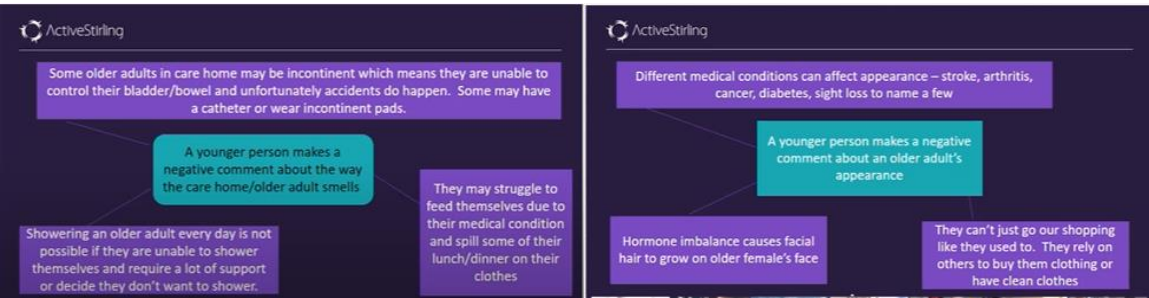
Laura explains ‘Some people living with dementia do not have a filter and so it’s important to explain this to the young people.’ Equally, some older people do not see it as being politically incorrect – but once explained, they can be very apologetic.’



Laura also included a plan of action for the young people, if a scenario did occur.



So, Laura was keen that the scenario was also switched – so what to do if a young person said something inappropriate about an older person.



These 'scenarios' helped Laura find space to have these discussions with the young people before meeting the older people and ensured that it wasn't just older people being in the wrong but that the young people may hold stereotypical views of older people.

Laura now includes 'How confident do you feel in knowing what to do if something happens during an intergenerational session?' in her evaluation which she asks at the beginning and end of the programme to measure the impact of changing the briefing sessions.

As Laura says 'I could have just stopped the sessions all together but instead I reached out to GWT and got some support. Things do go wrong but this year, we've managed to adapt the programme to prepare the pupils for it which is the positive out of it. It's nothing that I've done or that's wrong with the project, it's just that society is changing and, in a way, society is going to be changing for years. We've learned from our mistakes and improved our preparation with both generations. It's a wonderful and happy project – just that one time in five years – but enough for me to do something about it.'

Thanks to Laura for talking to us. You can find out more about [GAT here](#).